Vows - 'I didn't know where to go'

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Vows - 'I didn't know where to go'

by reid_simp

Summary

Tommy ventures to Margate after his wagon is set on fire at the end of season 6

Notes

okay, so this is my first talfie fic, right, which i've put off for sooo long but have given in!!! please enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

“I didn’t know where to go,” is the first thing Tommy says. Not a ‘Hi Alfie; it's been a while. Hope you weren’t worried about me.’ He’s drenched from the rain outside, and Alfie’s sure he must’ve been walking for quite some time to get this much water on him. Or he’s been waiting outside for a while, debating whether to knock. Either would be entirely plausible when it comes to Tommy.

“Come in, Tom,” Alfie replies, stepping out of the way to let Tommy in, but he doesn’t move. “Right, mate. Don't know about you, but I don’t really want the rain getting in, so I'm shutting this door, whether you’re in here or not.” It’s an empty threat, more of a joke than anything else. Tommy doesn’t move. Alfie sighs, grabbing his hat as some sort of protection, stepping outside and gently taking Tommy by the arm, guiding him slowly into the house. “Should’ve known you needed me when you stopped answering my calls, Tom.” he’s guiding him to the armchair he’d sat on just weeks ago when he told him Ruby was dead.

He'd stared blankly into the distance, into the bookshelves, but he wasn’t reading the spines, eyes glassed over, he wasn’t seeing much of anything. He didn’t stay the night, because he had to get back to London to meet with some fascists Alfie couldn’t be bothered to remember. Alfie had tried to stop him, tried to tell him to fucking stop before he collapses, but Tommy was gone before he could stop him. He'd called Ada after that, told her to watch the fuck out because if Tommy died on her watch, Alfie would kill her. Of course, that had been an empty threat, too. He remembers how terrified she’d been when she’d called him after the rally, told him what Lizzie had told her.

He'd always been a fan of Lizzie, Alfie had. For the most part. Didn’t appreciate whatever she must’ve said to Tommy in that field to make him act the way he did for the next five months, strange and broken apart in a way he hadn’t been before.

“There, Tom. I’ll get Esther to make some tea, okay?” He pauses. “Have you eaten?” Tommy reluctantly shakes his head. No point in lying, Alfie would know anyway. Try to feed him anyway. “Esther!”

When she appears, Esther smiles at Tommy. “Morning Mr Shelby. It’s very good to see you.” She’s drowning in relief, Alfie can tell. He'd told her the cryptic words he’d told him in Canada, about ‘dying anyway’. Alfie heartbreakingly assumed Tommy would be dead by now, after he stopped calling.

“Can you get us some tea, please? And some crackers and cheese?” Esther nods, quickly setting about her task. Alfie smiles at Tommy. “Thank god for her, eh? It’s been years since I've even lifted a finger in this house, honestly!”

Tommy doesn’t smile, of course, but there's a hint of something in his eyes there hadn’t been before. A bit of light that Alfie, honestly, hasn’t seen in a long time. Especially not since Ruby. “Right, you’re gonna have to explain a couple things here, right?” he begins as he fetches a blanket to cover Tommy’s wet clothes with. He'll get Tommy to change later, but first they need to talk. “Because you don’t call me for a month, right? After killing your cousin and telling me you’re dying, you go blank on me? See, I thought you were dead; you’re gonna need a pretty good explanation for that, Tom.” It’s half-hearted, and there’s no

malice in his voice. He's trying to stop Tommy from breaking down right in front of him, like he looks like he’s about to.

“Thought I was dying, Alfie. Ruby saved me.”

Alfie’s used to this sort of chat. Gypsy stuff sometimes, though when he was on the laudanum, he was sure it was beyond all the witchcraft. He doesn’t even know what this is, whether he should believe it or not. “What do you mean, Tom?” he asks as he sits down on the sofa opposite.

“Fucking doctor.” He stops. Alfie's not sure he’s going to continue, though he knows by now it’s important to give Tommy time to say what he needs to say. Talking is hard sometimes. Eventually, he finds the words. “Fascist....” Trails off again. Seems to think for a while, considering. He's clearly not had time to process this; it’s still raw news. “Made me think... I was dying.”

Then he stops. Alfie waits to see if there’s anymore, but it turns out that’s all Tommy’s giving him for now. “Right, well he sounds like a dick, right? Not worth another thought. I'm assuming you’ve dealt with him?”

“No.”

“No?”

“Armistice.”

“What? Right, Tommy, I appreciate your cryptic allure, right? But I'm gonna need a little more; I don’t quite understand.”

He doesn’t reply for a moment, thinking. “The bell rung. 11th hour.”

Then Alfie understands. Moving for so fucking long, his feet must be hurting. That's why he’s like this now, speaking like he’s drowning, thinking like it hurts. Because now he’s stopped, and the inertia hurts too, like the aftermath of a car crash where the car has been flipping for years and now has hit the ground. “Ah.”

Well,” he starts after thinking. “I’m sure your family are worried about you. Should I give them a call, maybe? Just let them know you’re okay?”

“I think they think I'm dead.”

“Well, I'm not gonna lie, Tom, I thought you were dead. Did they know about your...” Tommy never actually said what he was supposed to be dying of. “ailment?”

“Arthur. Arthur knew at the end.” That seems to hit a nerve. Tommy seems endlessly worried about Arthur. Yes, Alfie thinks. This is his way in.

“Well, why don’t I call Ada, right? And ask her how Arthur’s doing?” Tommy seems to consider this. Clearly he’s considering whether not knowing is better. One brother shunned

from the family, two dead, on top of his already fragile mental state and tendency for suicidal thoughts. Tommy finally nods but doesn't say a word. He looks pale.

Out of earshot of Tommy, in the office: "Ada?" Alfie says into the phone. "Yeah, it's Alfie. Look, I know you probably weren't expecting to hear from me, but I've got Tommy here, right-" he's cut off by her gasp. "Yeah, I know. Alive and well, but that's a whole 'nother story, but he's here, and he's safe and alive. I just wanted to let you know he's okay and with me. I'll look after him. And look," he pauses. "He's worried about Arthur. Can I tell him Arthur's okay?"

"Yes, he's- Well." She stops, considers. "He's alive. After Tommy left, he... he went downhill, but he's alive and we're looking after him." She pauses again. "Just tell Tommy he's okay. He doesn't need this. Is he- is he okay?"

"Well, I don't know where he's been since he left you, but he's only just arrived at mine, about ten minutes ago, so I don't know much about his overall condition. But, he's upright for the most part and I don't think he's high, so that's a plus." He chuckles but it's mostly to comfort Ada."

"Tell him he can come home whenever he wants." Ada was always Alfie's favourite, never forced Tommy into things for her own good, always trying to look out for him. She's not telling him to force Tommy to come home; she's not marching down to Margate to drag him back. She knows if this is where Tommy came first, this is where he needs to be.

"Tommy," Alfie starts once the phone is down and he's back in the living room, greeted with a cup of tea on the table between them. "Arthur is alright." Tom sags with relief, taking a deep breath. "Ada was very relieved to know you're okay, right? She says you can come home whenever you want, but assured me that you can stay here for as long as you need. She's taking care of everything at home."

Tommy can breathe. Armistice.

End Notes

i'm desperately trying to get this finished by the end of the month! so this is my second today! hope you enjoyed my first talfie :)

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